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Senator Assays U. S. Role and CIA

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WASHINGTON— We think of the State department as the agency that conducts our foreign affairs.

But a tremendous amount of that business is directed by the Defense department and the Central Intelligence agency. The State department seems a little removed from everyday life. But Defense and the CIA are even more remotely removed.

This is one of the sober thoughts that come from "The Limits of Power," written by Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D-Minn.), and published last week by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. The main theme of the book is that we have ignored the limits of our power in making our foreign commitments.

"America's contribution to world civilization must be more than a continuous performance

demonstration that we can police the planet," McCarthy concludes.

He pointed out that earlier empires in Greece, Rome, Spain, France and Britain learned that lesson the hard way.

BUT THE chapters that shook this reader were the ones devoted to the Defense department and the CIA. Through our military assistance program, which is directed from the Pentagon in close co-operation with the arms industry, the United States has become the world's greatest supplier of arms. McCarthy believes that the Senate foreign relations committee, of which he is a member, should give increasing attention "to the desirability, and the very morality, of our arms distribution program."

The senator also reminds us that the CIA, through its "operational functions," has come a

long and questionable way from 1947, when it was established by the national security act "for the purpose of co-ordinating intelligence activities." The recent revelations of infiltration of colleges, student organizations and trade unions by the CIA lends substance to McCarthy's suggestion that Congress should exercise more supervision over this secret agency.

It is interesting that in this period, when our statesmen are looking for fat to cut in the federal budget, we don't have the slightest public idea of the annual secret appropriations for the CIA. If McCarthy's quiet skepticism should spread among his colleagues, they might look to see if they couldn't save some money at the CIA.

Someone should leave marked copies of "The Limits of Power" on all the desks in the Senate chamber.